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Text:

UNCLAS MUSCAT 01173

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MUSCATCX:

ACTION: POLE
INFO: OMC DAO DCM AMB PAO POLM

DISSEMINATION: POLE
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:GGRAPPO
DRAFTED: POLE:BMGRIMM,POLE: H
Cleared: PAO: RARBUCKLE

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PP RUEHC RUEHEE RUEHLB RHMFIUU
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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 311247Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6968
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 0063
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, NEA/PPD, INR/R/MR

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL KMDR KPAO MU
SUBJECT: TFLE01: QANA STRIKE FUELS CRITICAL PRESS COVERAGE
OF U.S. POLICY

¶1. The Israeli air strikes on the Lebanese village of Qana drew overwhelmingly virulent and critical front-page press coverage from each of Oman's daily newspapers. Amidst headlines reading "Bloodbath in Lebanon" and "Global Outrage over Israeli Carnage," the dailies concentrated on civilian casualties and carried multiple pictures of children killed in the blast. The headlines also focused on the Secretary's return to the United States, reporting that she was unwelcome in Beirut.

¶2. Editorials routinely criticized U.S. support of Israel. State-owned Arabic daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) congratulated the Lebanese government for not meeting with the Secretary, noting that "any negotiations under the hell of Israeli bombardment would be meaningless" and ominously predicting that "the counter violence that superpowers fear shall indeed be staged blindly without differentiating between the killer or the innocent." Private English daily "Oman Tribune" (circulation 8,000) remarked that the Secretary, "after soothing nerves in Israel and playing the

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piano before an international audience of bigwigs in Kuala Lumpur, is returning to the United States to plot the next turn and twist in this diabolical Israeli-scripted strategy." Further media reaction will be covered septel.

¶3. Internet chat site al-Sablah carried some of the strongest criticism of U.S. policy. One participant posted a clumsily worded warning to the Embassy and other American installations and interests in Oman, noting that a peaceful

Oman might become a fire that "turns their lives into hell." Noting their hatred of the U.S. government, several al-Sablah posters wrote a letter to the Ambassador, requesting him and his staff to leave the country, as he is "not welcome in Oman." Others, however, disapproved of threatening Americans by expressing their views that Oman should show its displeasure toward U.S. policy by boycotting American products. Some also urged that the Omani government step back from joint initiatives with the United States, such as the Free Trade Agreement.

¶4. The sharp criticism in the Sablah echoes the strong negative public sentiment toward U.S. support of Israel that has been posted on the site over the past several weeks. Most respondents have pinned the blame for the continued civilian casualties on the U.S. as a result of its reluctance to intervene. Some described the United States as a state sponsor of terrorism, while others characterized the President as a "great devil" and "war criminal." Others blame the Secretary for her efforts to stall peace negotiations in order to allow "the massacre in Lebanon to continue."

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